

Ex Libris by Joaquin Ayala, Ph.D.

Hello folks and welcome to the Ex Libris article for July 2019! The spring season in our area has been particularly rainy, or at least, gloomy, for a large part of it. One of those "...this spring it rained for 35 days, and then it rained for 45 more..." It is nice to see some clear skies and weather lately, which got me to thinking about the book we are focusing on this month.

Now You See It, Now You Don't – Lessons in Sleight of Hand by **Bill Tarr** is a large format (8.5 x 11), 224-page soft cover book published in 1976 by Vintage Books (a division of Random House). This, in my humble opinion, is one of the greatest books on sleight of hand ever written.

There is something for everyone in here, and although the book is written for the beginner, it will serve even professional magicians. The book starts off by teaching you the very basics – card handling, shuffling, false shuffles, cutting and moves on to a handful of card effects using those techniques. The next chapter focuses on card flourishes like fans, spreads, springing the cards, waterfall shuffles, one-handed shuffles, Charlier cuts, card throwing and even back palming.

Coins are next, and again he teaches some basic techniques such as classic, finger and thumb palming, a coin switch, vanishes and productions and briefly describes about a half dozen coin gimmicks and gaffs. There are even a few flourishes thrown in for good measure. Wrapping it all up are a handful of effects with coins, including one of the best handlings of the Gadabout Coins (2 in the Hand/1 in the Pocket) in print.

The rest of the book includes much of the same sequences for billiard balls and related gimmicks, sponge balls, thimbles, cigarettes and silks. He describes a Cups and Balls routine, as well as T&R tissue paper, the Three Shell Game, some tricks with matches, the classic Vanishing Saltshaker and even a stretching rope effect!

In between there are little snippets of hints and tips, what to do and not to do, a little touch of practice and performance tips, etc. At the end of the book there is a nice little glossary and a short reference list of other learning materials. Overall, this book gives you a nice variety of things to try, and much of the material would work in both stand-up and close-up environments. The material is also very clearly and concisely described, and the illustrations are very nicely done. I highly recommend this book for anyone that has not read it, and if you have, dig it out and read it again!

Join me again next month for another foray into magic literature! – **J.M.A.**